

Suicide Park Cemetery - Deaths at a Tie Hack Camp

Located on the North Slope of the Uinta Mountains just a few feet from the Utah - Wyoming border in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest is an area called Suicide Park. And in this area lies a very small cemetery, Suicide Park Cemetery. Not exactly the greatest name for a cemetery, but this is an unusual cemetery, and quite possibly the only known cemetery of its type in the United States.



Tie Hack Camp

Suicide Park Cemetery is part of what remains of a tie hack camp that was located in this area from approximately 1916 until the 1930's. Tie hacks were the men responsible for supplying the railroad companies with the lumber needed for railroad ties. It was backbreaking work in often less than decent conditions.

To give you an idea of how many ties were needed it takes approximately 3,000 railroad ties to lay one mile of track. Tie hacks worked 10 hours a day and made the equivalent of \$140 a day.
((<http://www.sweetwaternow.com/history-of-union-pacific-tie-hacks/>))

They would move from camp to camp building small cabins to live in, and would normally dismantle their cabin and take it with them to the next site. There are a couple of cabins remaining in the Suicide Park area.



Deaths at Camp

The first death that occurred at camp was that of Ole Olsen (one newspaper lists his name as Olaf Nelsen). Ole or Olaf was 75 years old and the only man buried here that I could not locate a death certificate for. Other accounts say that he was given the option of returning to town and dying in a house that would've been much more comfortable. Apparently, Ole refused and was later found dead in his bed. His tombstone lists his death date as May 14th, 1928 but the newspaper article which was printed June 1st, 1928, puts his date of death as May 26th, 1928.



Last Saturday Olaf Nelsen, 75, was found dead in his bed in his cabin at the Standard Tie camp on Smith's Fork of Green River near Robertson. He had been ill for some time and had had such care as his fellow workmen could give him. Ray Durnford, of Evanston, county coroner, was called there Monday and after investigation found he died of natural causes, his death being due to general debility and to old age. The funeral services were conducted by the Rev. Wallace Johnson, of Robertson, at the grave and burial was Monday in the plot set aside by the camp at Robertson.

Jack Rose was the next death to occur at the camp on June 1st, 1928. Jack's death certificate lists his age at approximately 60 years and his cause of death "unknown". Not much is known at all about Jack Rose other than he was said to have been born in Colorado. According to the place marker, a gun was found near Jack's body and it was assumed he committed suicide. However, there must have been some question as to whether or not he was murdered. His cause of death is simply listed as unknown. Jack was buried here on June 8th, 1928.



1 PLACE OF DEATH		1-2-3 0300	State Board of Health File No.
Crematorium, Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.		STATE OF UTAH—DEATH CERTIFICATE	
2 FULL NAME		JACK ROSE	
(a) Residence		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
(b) Usual place of abode		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
3 SEX		Male	
4 AGE		About 60	
5 DATE OF DEATH		June 1, 1928	
6 TIME OF DEATH		Not recorded	
7 CAUSE OF DEATH		Unknown	
8 PLACE OF BIRTH		Colorado	
9 PLACE OF DEATH		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
10 PLACE OF BURIAL		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
11 PLACE OF INTERMENT		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
12 PLACE OF INTERMENT		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
13 PLACE OF INTERMENT		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
14 PLACE OF INTERMENT		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
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18 PLACE OF INTERMENT		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
19 PLACE OF INTERMENT		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	
20 PLACE OF INTERMENT		Standard Tie Camp, Smith's Fork of Green River, near Robertson, Co.	

Two years later on October 14th, 1930 a fellow tie hack found the body of Charles Mattsen in the forest. It was his death which would give this location its macabre name. Charlie's throat had been slashed and a razor blade was found next to his body. Like with Jack Rose, the marker gives more information behind Charlie's death. Charlie was known to be a heavy drinker and his friends were concerned about his state of mind. Shortly before he was found dead they hid his guns. Charlie Mattsen was buried on October 21st, 1930.



Although records are scarce, logging camps remained in this area through the mid to late 1930's. Suicide Park Cemetery is one of the few reminders of the tie hack era. While there were other deaths that occurred during this time, most were buried in Mountain View, Wyoming. It's unknown why they chose to bury these men at camp. If you want to learn more about the history of tie hackers in this area visit:
<https://www.cordellmandersen.com/2012/02/>

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